

Welcome Max Duboff

Post by "Don" of July 5, 2026 at 10:14 PM

Quote from Cassius

do you agree with a statement Don in an earlier post that he believes tranquility is specifically defined in terms of a lack of fear of gods and of death?

[Quote from Max DuBoff](#)

No, tranquility must be the absence of all fears.* Epicurus identified fear of the gods and of death as particularly common fears, so he devoted a lot of attention to them. But there are plenty of other fears.

*I've been struggling recently with fear of future pain. As KD 4 notes, fatal pain will be short; but it'll be bad when it happens, so it seems like the sage should justifiably fear it in the meantime, thus disturbing the sage's tranquility.

If I'm being invoked, I feel I need to expand my thoughts on this. [Cassius](#) , what I think you're referring to is this below where I wrote:

Quote from Don

I understand that ataraxia refers specifically (for Epicurus) to the absence (a-) of "disturbance" (tarakhe) in the mind caused by fear of the gods, anxiety about death, worry about having "enough" and what other people think, etc.

I'll freely admit that "etc." is doing a lot of heaving lifting.

As for a what Epicurus thinks is covered under ataraxia, he says in the Letter to Herodotus: "*mental tranquillity (ataraxia) means being released from all these troubles and cherishing a continual remembrance of the highest and most important truths.*" (10.82) The "*all these troubles*" refers back to 10.81 to his assertion that "*the greatest anxiety (τάραχος) of the human mind arises through the belief that the heavenly bodies are blessed and indestructible, and that at the same time they have volitions and actions and causality inconsistent with this belief ; ... if men do not set bounds to their terror, they endure as much or even more intense anxiety (ταραχήν) than the man whose views on these matters are quite vague.*" This is similar to the Letter to Pythocles where Epicurus writes Letter to Pythocles (DL 10.85): "In the first place, remember that, like everything else, knowledge of celestial phenomena, whether taken along with other things or in isolation, has no other end in view than peace of mind (ἀταραξίαν) and firm conviction." So, getting a firm understanding and belief that celestial phenomena has

the goal of peace of mind/ataraxia.

As [Max DuBoff](#) points out, "*Epicurus identified fear of the gods and of death as particularly common fears, so he devoted a lot of attention to them.*" I would say he devoted a lot of attention to them because he identified them as the most important and detrimental disturbances to our minds. The first big hurdle we have to get over to establish ataraxia. Getting a correct perspective on the gods and not fearing them comes first in [Principal Doctrines](#), first in the Vatican Sayings, first in the Letter to Menoikeus, first in the Tetracharmakos. I would say he placed *paramount* importance of ridding ourselves of those fears and anxieties of the gods and death and related topics like supernatural causes of celestial phenomena, divine punishment, etc.

Yes, I agree there are plenty of other fears and anxieties, and I would agree Epicurus tries to teach how to alleviate them. So, yes, ataraxia could include the eradication of fears and anxieties both at the level of gods and death but also at the level of less significant or overwhelming sources of pains.

He tries to eliminate or alleviate, for example, fear of future pain by his living example of his last days and the observations of "pain is short if..." But he also tries to get us to replace fear and anxiety with prudence, virtuous behavior, wise choices. If we fear what might happen to our loved ones after die, make plans for what happens after we die. If we fear retribution from enemies, try to not make enemies or stay away from them. All this would contribute to a stable peace of mind that we are doing, have done, or will do everything within our power to trust that the pleasures we have now continue into the future.

So, for his at least, I would say ataraxia includes freedom from fear and anxiety writ large; with the caveat that the BIG ONES are death and the supernatural gods.